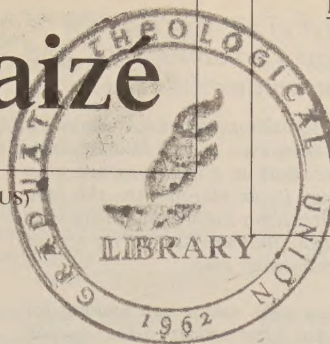


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November - December 1984

# Letter from Taizé

N 0750-3695 Bimonthly 3.00 FF - £0.45 (UK) - \$0.90 (US)



Advent — Commitment  
Prayer by Brother Roger  
Meditating on the Word  
The Meeting in Cologne  
News

## Advent, a time of waiting

A time to wait together with all those who live rooted in God's faithfulness. With all who have glimpsed, perhaps only once, the shimmering of a dawn that is for all humanity. A time to wait for all those who no longer wait, whose hope has been stifled by the harshness of life, but for whom also the morning star rises : to shine on those who sit in darkness."

Of waiting, the old man Simeon is a perfect example. He knows that God is faithful. He awaits the fulfillment of the promise : with his eyes, he is to see Christ. Each day he waits for this event. And each passing day belies his hope right until the close of his long life. It is as if the endless waiting was intended to give an idea of the vastness of the coming and of the limitless love that has generated it. In our waiting, could God be creating more space for his gift ?

The waiting found in the Gospel always surpasses what it is reasonable to expect : waiting for Elizabeth, "she who was said to be barren" to give

birth in her old age, for the virgin to conceive, for a child to set the world free. To persevere in the certainty that "nothing is impossible with God", there is the need to be together. A need to be Church. The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth (Luke 1, 39-56) is an image of the Church. Together, to rejoice in our waiting. To be together, like them, with jubilation and praise, to welcome the event of God and the fullness that it brings for every human being, for the world.

Through the birth of Jesus, God responds to every human waiting. In it, the waiting of ages finds an answer. But in such a peculiar way ! Nothing is more prepared than Christ's coming. Towards it is directed the history of an entire people, of the world ; generations of prophets herald it. But when the time of accomplishment is reached, it is as if everything had to be improvised : no room is left at the inn, hastily a manger has to be prepared, imagination is needed to transform it into a crib. So why the long preparation ? It was not a meticulous arrangement that made everything easy. Rather it was what allowed believers to discern, in the vulnerability of an infant, the face of God.

Young couple have reflected on the two questions which the " Letter from Haiti " put before everyone :

## COMMITMENT WITH GOD AND HUMAN COMMITMENTS

The " Letter from Haiti " invites us to make a commitment, discreetly, for a length of time that each person will decide, to help us to carry on until the world meetings in 1985-86. These future meetings are invitations to us to set out as pilgrims. They are points of reference in the future, concrete dates to work towards and to stimulate our efforts. These are " worldwide " meetings, not just " European " meetings, to help us cover and celebrate the universal reality of the Church. Two questions are proposed to prepare us for : how can we find in God the creative energy to

reduce human suffering ? How can we be a ferment of trust and peace when so many events in and around us seem to go against this ?

Commitment has constantly been a question for us. And our foremost struggle has been to find a peaceful attitude and to find rest in God so that commitment be not just in response to our uneasy conscience. Looking at these first few years, it seems that for us our primary commitment to keep is that of fidelity to God. From there our human commitments will flow.



## He guides our human choices

*Fidelity to God means first of all trusting that he will guide our choice of human commitments, and that he will give us the opportunities.*

After our marriage, I joined a large company as an engineer. We spent two years in Europe and then two in the Middle East, where I was foreman in a port. Over there in a company working abroad, and in a country where money flows abundantly, the idea of greater justice in the world, or of reducing human suffering was not particularly present. So we thought that we should try to put what I had learnt to the service of something else.

When we came back, we spent a year and a half looking for another job. I was asking myself, "Am I not trying to find myself just to ease my conscience?" And also, "Is God not asking me to stay in the company, with the ambiguities with which I cannot live peacefully but which he is perhaps asking me to overcome?" And above all, "Do I let God intervene enough and present the opportunities?" Trusting does not mean standing passively, waiting for the opportunity to arise, because God asks spontaneous gestures which show our desire to advance with him. We wrote to the International Red Cross, and the Commission for Refugees ... kinds of work for which the motives seemed clear. But after all the meetings and investigations a different conclusion emerged: if I really believe that God has accompanied me all the days of my life, then what I have experienced is not to be rejected; the important thing is not finding a job without ambiguities (it does not exist), but to find one in which I can put up fairly peacefully with the contradictions, without that drawing me away from God because of a feeling of guilt. Now I have found a job where all that I have been through is of great use. Of course there are ambiguities, but I find here an important sense of public service (working for the local government). I often think of the sentence we said on our wedding day: "Happy are you, for whom I have closed the roads which were not mine. You were seeking your happiness, and I offer you my Beatitudes."

## Despite the limitations of our commitments

*Fidelity to God also means trusting that despite the apparent insignificance of our commitments, God gathers together all the little gestures of many people and makes something beautiful with them.*

In the Middle East, we were living in a compound for Europeans, with no contact with the local population. There was an

affluent lifestyle to compensate for the lack of contact with the outside. As the foreman, I had to participate in the existing forms of corruption in order to keep the work-site going. In this context, our commitment was praying with some Little Sisters of Jesus who worked for the poor population and who are close to the people. We tried a few gestures: having the workers' lodgings rebuilt, organising the Easter and Christmas celebrations, finding a simpler way of life...

How can we find our place in a complex world and what commitments can we take there without letting ourselves be discouraged by the apparent insignificance of our efforts? How can we carry on when we feel alone or badly understood? We are reminded of "struggle and contemplation": one does not go without the other, like the two axes of the cross, vertical and horizontal. Uniting prayer and commitment, that is what keeps us at the heart of things. We are sure that it is from God that we receive our place in the world. How can we discover what it is? Above all by prayer, where, in silence, we try to sweep aside our anxieties and listen to God. As the years go by, we realise more and more that it is not easy to pray regularly. But reading the psalms links us to believers of ancient times and broadens our prayer, preventing it from becoming too centred on ourselves. We also believe in the importance of friendship. A few friends help us to understand God's plan for us, how to read into events, and they confirm us in our discoveries.

This relationship with God sometimes seems very arduous to us and way beyond our reach, but we want to live it with child-like hearts. Often it is through our three little daughters that we look to learn spontaneity, wonder, simplicity, and above all, trust. So freed from our doubts and false questions, we can go forward and rest in God. Not hiding our joy, we dare to be happy in order to be witnesses of hope, "ferments of trust and peace". This too is a way of sharing a little of ourselves. Devoting time to others. So often we hear Africans and Asians who are discouraged by our lack of time, even to say hello. We can rediscover the value of gestures which make our relationships more human. Being informed of other realities can open our hearts to universality: there are so many people in the world who do not share the basic human rights. As a sign of this openness, a world map in our homes can be a reminder that here and there, alone and in groups, other people are also seeking to be bearers of hope and peace.

Risen Jesus, in our darkness you kindle a fire which never dies out.

Even when discouragement and doubt seem to stifle everything, you are there for each person, without exception. You make a fire burn with our ordeals and our own thorns. And so, with you, even the stones of our heart can become glowing coals, giving light in the night of humanity.

You have confided a mystery of hope to us, poor people of God: you want to make us ferments of reconciliation. All the same, you know our weakness and our faltering. But you look to the heart, and even if our heart would condemn us, you are so much greater than our heart.

Yes, in our darkness, kindle a fire that never dies out.



## Thu 1 ALL SAINTS

John wrote: We are already children of God ; what is to be in the future has not yet been revealed ; but we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is.  
1 John 3.1-3

The two following pages present two possibilities for meditating the Word of God and going to the sources of faith :

A Bible text is suggested for each day (the reading for the midday prayer in Taizé). It is short enough to be memorised or read over several times during the day. The reference gives the passage from which the short text is taken and which is read in Taizé either in the morning or the evening .

An introduction presents several chapters of the Bible (read in Taizé during the same period). It may be useful to read these chapters in an edition of the Bible which has explanatory notes. Above all, don't be hindered by what you do not understand on a first reading. Each day, it is enough to find a few words, even a single word, to linger on and underline. Later the passages that you have underlined will shed light on other more difficult ones that you did not grasp at first sight.

2 John wrote: If we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

Romans 5.6-11

3 The eye of the Lord is on his faithful, those who hope in his love, to keep them alive in time of trouble.

Psalms 33

4 Have we not all one Father ? Did not one God create us ? Why then do we break faith with one another ?

Malachi 2.10

5 Paul wrote: Where sin abounded, grace has overflowed.

Romans 5.15-17,20

6 Paul wrote: Buried with Christ in baptism, we have a new life with him.

Romans 6.1-6

7 Listen Lord, forgive and act, deal with each person as their conduct deserves ; for you know every heart, -you alone know the hearts of all.

1 Kings 8.38-43

8 You teach me the path of life, O Lord, in your presence, fullness of joy.

Psalms 16

9 Paul wrote: The law of the Spirit which gives life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8.1-4

10 You are my lamp, O Lord, you light up my weakness ; with you I push through the barriers, with the God I leap the wall.

Psalms 18

11 The wisdom of God is readily seen by those who love her. Those who seek her will find.

Wisdom 6.12-16

12 Elijah waited for the Lord on Mount Sinai. A great wind arose but the Lord was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire there came a voice of silence, and the Lord spoke to Elijah.

1 Kings 19.9-13a

13 Paul wrote: The spirit you received is not a spirit of slavery, bringing fear into your lives again ; it is the spirit of sonship, and it makes us cry out : Abba !

Romans 8.14-17

14 Paul wrote: We look towards our salvation with hope. Now, to hope for what we see is not hope at all. But to hope for what we do not see means to persevere for it with constancy.

Romans 8.18-25

Thu 15 The Spirit helps us in our weakness ; we do not know how to pray properly, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.

Romans 8.26-30

Fri 16 Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be seen. For the kingdom of God is among you.

Luke 17.20-25

Sat 17 Thus says the Lord: I have seen the way that my people went in rebellion ; but I will heal them and pour out my consolation upon them.

Isaiah 57.14-15,18-19

SUN 18 More than anything else, watch over your heart, for from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 4.18,23-27

Mon 19 The Word of God is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart.

Romans 10.8-13

Tue 20 Paul wrote: Do not model yourselves on this world, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewal of your judgement so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good.

Romans 12.1-5

Wed 21 Rejoice in your hope, be steadfast in trials, keep on praying, be always ready to offer hospitality.

Romans 12.6-13

Thu 22 The Lord said to his people: You shall call your gates Praise. The sun shall be no longer your light by day, nor the moon by night, for the Lord will be your eternal light, your God will be your glory.

Isaiah 60.17b-20

Fri 23 Jesus said to a blind man: Receive your sight ; your faith has saved you. And immediately the man received his sight and followed Jesus, glorifying God.

Luke 18.35-43

Sat 24 Paul wrote: The kingdom of God is not a question of exterior rules, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 14.17

SUN 25 Jesus said: Truly, I say to you, in so far as you have done good to one of the least of my brothers, you have done it to me.

Matthew 25.34-40

Mon 26 In my distress, I called to the Lord, he heard me and set me free.

Psalms 118

Tue 27 Paul wrote: Let us not judge one another ; rather decide never to be the cause of your brother stumbling or falling.

Romans 14.1,4,7-13

Wed 28 We are overcome by our faults, Lord, but you pardon them.

Psalms 65

Thu 29 Paul wrote: Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Romans 15.7-13

## Fri 30 SAINT ANDREW, APOSTLE

Jesus saw Simon and Andrew his brother as they were casting their net in the lake, for they were fishermen. He said to them: Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. And straightaway they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 4.18-22

## ISAIAH, CHAPTERS 56-66

This third part of the book of the prophet Isaiah was composed after the incredible miracle of the return from exile, when a nation on the verge of extinction came back to life. This was more than anyone could hope for. And yet, it was not enough to return home ; now a life in harmony with God had to be begun anew. Not only did the ruined cities (including Jerusalem) have to be rebuilt, but still more importantly, people had to grow in awareness of their unique vocation.

When the people begin to perform fasts and penances to implore God's grace, an anonymous prophet arises to explain to them the true meaning of these fasts and penances. The result is one of the most beautiful texts in the Hebrew Scriptures on social justice (ch. 58).

When a concern for restoration threatens to harden the nation's heart, the prophet reminds them that God is especially close to the humble and the contrite (57, 15 and 66,2). When those who have returned from exile lose courage and have the impression that God is still making them pay for their sins, the same prophet insists that God does not dwell on the past, that he forgives, heals and comforts (57,16-18). In their discouragement, the people see only darkness and obscurity around them, but the prophet already sees a new light rising over their heads (60,1-3). The work of reconstruction is slow, and the people feel that God has abandoned them. But for the prophet the nation is already like a young bride in whom God rejoices (62,4-5).

That is the calling of this prophet : to comfort, encourage, rehabilitate, and proclaim a new spirit of joy and praise (61,1). God will give the demoralized nation the ability to sing his praises once again (57,19). Praise and salvation will spring up (61,11). They will protect the faithful like the walls of the city (60,18).



## SIGNS OF HOPE IN COLOGNE

During the meeting in Cologne, some mornings will be devoted to discovering signs of hope in the parishes and neighbourhoods.

At the moment, young people of Cologne and

- A sign of hope ? In our neighbourhood we made visits to people who are not often visited. We talked about it with our priest and he gave us a list of addresses. We went to see, in particular, the very old and the very sick. What happened ? In fact it was us who received something. With them we found joy that had left us long ago.
- It is a sign of hope to see that the churches of our neighbourhood visit one another more and more often and that those with responsibilities do not remain apart. Since the first European meetings, what has impressed me deeply is the communion that has been built up between people of different countries. Without speaking the language of either the Italians or the Spanish, I had an immediate rapport with them. We are also looking forward to that here in Cologne and to my eyes, it is a sign of peace.
- One regular event that always gives me hope is a prayer that we have started in a psychiatric hospital. A lot of depressive patients come to it and it is surprising to see the joy that flows from that prayer and the happiness which emerges afterwards in conversation.
- As far as I'm concerned, I find a sign of hope in a Bible group for 15 year-olds that I am in charge of. It is incredible hearing the questions which they often ask.

*Programme* : participation in the life of the districts and local church communities of Cologne and neighbouring towns ; prayer together twice a day in Cologne Cathedral and other churches ; workshops and meetings in small groups ; (possibility, for those who wish, to spend the 5 days in silence.)

**Registration:** send your form in before December 1st. Those hoping to organise a group to go to the meeting are asked to let us know even if nothing is certain (give estimate of numbers by Nov.15th)

**Arrival:** Friday morning December 28th between 7am and 12 noon (and not before, except the preparation teams)

*Departure:* Tuesday afternoon January 1st, from 3pm onwards

**Age:** the meeting is intended mainly for young adults, 17 years old and above. Young people under 17: only if accompanied by their parents or a group leader. Families and adults 30+ yrs. participate with younger people in all the meetings, they should arrive on Dec. 28th, not before.

**Accommodation:** with families, in church halls, or with religious communities. Essential to bring air-mattress and sleeping-bag. Separate dormitories for boys and girls.

REGISTRATION FORM, to be filled in by all participants, and to be sent, before 1st December to : EUROPEAN MEETING, F - 71250 TAIZÉ-COMMUNAUTÉ.

NAME :

FIRST NAME :

ADDRESS :

(with post code and country)

Tel.: ...../.....

Age : .....

**please circle 'yes' or 'no' to show which applies :**

I will make my own way to Cologne. yes / no

otherwise : I will be joining the group going from the town of : .....

leader's name : .....

I will arrive in Cologne on December 28th yes / no

I will arrive on Dec.26th for the preparation teams ..... yes / no

I receive the LETTER from TAIZE regularly ☐ yes / no ☐

I would like . . . . . additional forms and information

To help us prepare accommodation, please circle what applies to you:

woman      man      couple      family with children      disabled with helper

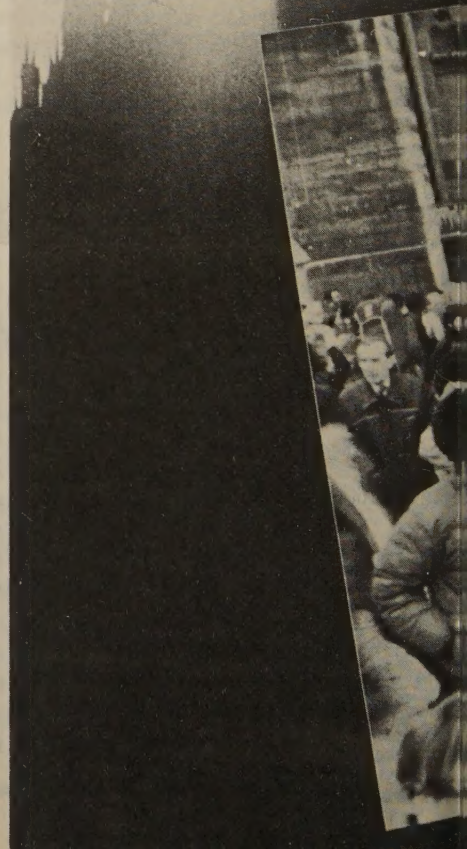
the nearby towns are looking around to see what these signs are in order to be able, when the day comes, to show them to the visitors from the other countries. Some of them have met to talk about it. Here are some of their comments :

- For the moment it is difficult for me to say what is "alive" in our church. Off the cuff, I'd almost say, "there is nothing here at all." But I know that some are willing to take up the challenge presented by the coming arrival of young people, from all over Europe, who will be expecting something from us.
- In my church community, I am in charge of a kindergarten and of the children's prayer. I am delighted to be able to transmit to them something which often their own parents cannot give them.
- What gives me support is, above all, the morning prayer that we have once a week : an hour which is in total contrast to everyday life and which changes the whole shape of the week.
- Often as I walk through the parish, I find so many signs of hope : there are people who have suffered a lot through life, unbearably, and yet they remain happy through it all. Hope also comes from people in the parish who take on humble tasks without asking if they are worthwhile. Within the parish, it is they who form the link between the most widely differing people.

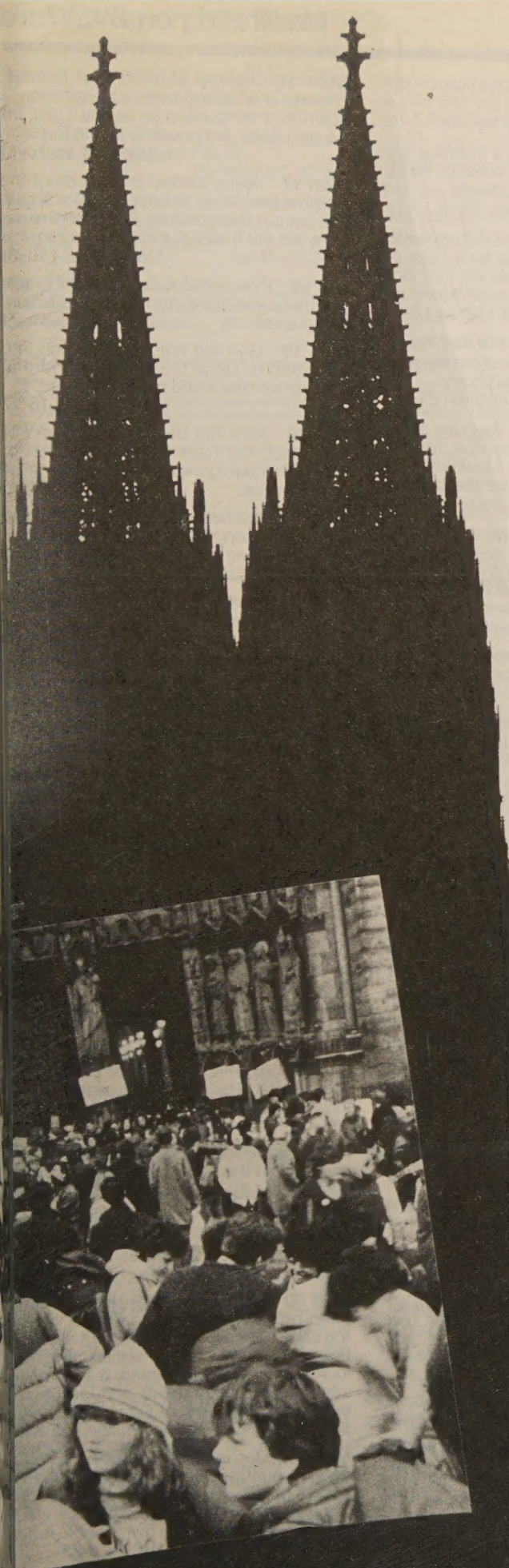
**Cost:** Pay on arrival in Deutsch Marks. Those whose currency is strong help those who come from countries with weaker currencies, or whose government prevents them from taking money out of the country. Price for English-speaking people and Scandinavians: 80 DM. This includes meals and a travel pass on public transport.

**Preparation teams** (possibility restricted to those who are 17 to 30 years)  
Those who can help with the work for the meeting (welcome, kitchen, music, etc.) or animation, should arrive on Dec.26th, and indicate this on their registration forms. On arrival, go straight to Machabäerstrasse 47 ( 5 minutes on foot from the railway station )

**Travel from Britain and Ireland:** People from the same region arrange among themselves to get a group train ticket or to hire a mini-bus or coach. (We cannot organise accommodation for coach drivers in Cologne). Special coaches for the Cologne meeting will be run by Frank Harris Coaches Ltd., Manor Road, West Thurrock, Grays, Essex RM16 1EH. tel/Purfleet (04026) 4911. London-Cologne return: Youth (up to 26 years): £40, Adult £51. You can also get tickets from other parts of Britain. (Book before Dec. 15th)







**In order to meet together once or twice to reflect and to pray, before the Cologne meeting (whether one is able to go or not), and for travel information, contact the following people :**

#### IRELAND

Anne Kelly, 53 The Rise, Glasnevin, **Dublin 9**. Tel.371337

Paul Branagh, 33 Strathmore Park North, **Belfast** BT 15 5HQ. Tel.774273

#### BRITAIN

**Prayer of departure in London, before the coaches leave for Cologne : 6.45 p.m. Thursday 27th December, at the Church of the Holy Apostles, Winchester Street, SW1 ( 5 minutes on foot, South-East from the coach station ). All are welcome, whether going to Cologne or not.**

#### WALES

**Cardiff** : Michael and Karin McKeogh, 465005. **Swansea** : John and Mildred Price, 41868.

#### SCOTLAND

**Aberdeen** : Sister Margaret Pope, The Convent, 3 Queen's Cross, AB9 2NL. **Glasgow** : Margaret Murray, 40 Drumry Road, Clydebank, G81 2LL. **Edinburgh** : Susie Harvey, 031-228-1988 ; Tim Foley : 031-445-4314.

#### NORTH-EAST ENGLAND

**Newcastle/Tyne (and contact for the pilgrimage of the cross)** : David Peel, 584264/590245 ; Karen Luthwaite, Cramlington 713574. **Sunderland** : Billy and Sheila Jackson, 280204. **Durham** : Brendan and Anne Nolan, Lanchester 521465. **Middlesbrough** : Bill and Frances Griffiths 782193. **York** : Sister Jane Whitlock, 29359. **Leeds** : Clare O'Reilly, 457421. **Bradford** : John and Vanessa Hargraves, Flat 5, 20 North Park Road, Heaton, BD9 4NT. ; Keri and Mark Thomas, 872131. **Sheffield** : Michael and Judith Jessop, 304924.

#### NORTH-WEST

**Preston** : Paul Swarbrick, 700231 ; Michael and Mary Turton, 713787. **Burnley** : Derek Grasby, 24946. **Liverpool** : Liz Halsall, 4 Queensdale Rd, Allerton ; Cathy Johnson, 051-733-5405. **Manchester** : Hazel Roberts and Anthea Murr, 061-226-1751. **Chester** : Alison Davies, 15 Rosewood Ave, Upton, Chester.

#### EAST MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA

**Nottingham** : David de Pomerai, 222611 ; Stephen Williams, 754275. **Leicester** : The Duncan family (Janè and Tom), The Croft, Station Road, North Kilworth, Lutterworth, LE17 6ER. **Northampton** : Edward Condry, 405946 ; Maria Pizzoni, 710743. **Cambridge** : Stephen and Maggie Cherry, 46 Malcolm Place, King Street, 323099. **Norwich** : Marigold Hall, 25 Hughenden Rd.

#### WEST MIDLANDS

**Coventry (and contact for the cross)** : Marie McLeod, 38 Brighton Street, Stoke, Coventry. **Shrewsbury** : Rebecca and Ruth Pollit, 65478. **Hereford** : John and Gillian Morris, The Vicarage, Church Rd, Clehonger, nr. Hereford. **Worcester** : Georgina Virr, Wichenford 577. **Birmingham** : Jean Nicholson, Queen's College, Somerset Rd, Edgbaston, 021-454-1527. **Oxford** : Michael and Liz Carmichael, Worcester College, 513462 ; Dave Smith, L.M.H.

#### SOUTH-WEST

**Basingstoke** : Viv O'Kelly, 20029. **Salisbury** : Mary Fry, 862363. **Bath** : Helen and Keith Moss, 315544. **Bristol** : Cathy Payne and Caroline Stone, Clifton Hill House, Lower Clifton Hall, BS8 1BX. **Exeter** : Stella and Mary New, Newton St. Cyres 247. **Cornwall** : John Roland, "Boslan", Porthleven, nr. Helston.

#### HOME COUNTIES

**Guildford** : Mike Horkan and Fr. Michael Evans, 893741. **Canterbury** : Kevin Wood, 710720. **Tonbridge** : John and Judy Hirst, 354690. **Hemel Hempstead** : Philip Dixon, 53681. **Milton Keynes** : Kathleen and Terry, 661654. **High Wycombe** : John Hadley, 35074.

#### GREATER LONDON

**Sydenham, and Sat. 24th Nov. : Prayer for All the Peoples of the Earth, in Notting Hill** : Jim and Sarah Sikorski, c/o 560-2873 **Camden, and prayers around the cross on the Fridays of Advent in Central London churches** : Jane Reed, 16 Gordonhouse Rd, NW5 1LN. 267-6481(home), 739-0729(work). **Bethnal Green, contact for the cross, and monthly prayer in the East End** : Rosemary Vaughan, 791-1205. **Ealing and Uxbridge** : Sister Elizabeth Oidonohoe, 997-2858. **Bermondsey** : Julia Roberts, 237-6224. **Blackheath : monthly prayer in local churches** : Jenny Standage, 319-3372. **Beckenham** : David Gummatt, 650-0970. **New Malden : regular Wednesday evening prayer in local churches** : Peter Butcher, 393-5408 ; Christine Donovan, 942-8261.

#### SCANDINAVIA

**Denmark** : Irene Krarup, Ostergade 24, 6420 Logumkloster. Niels Bartholdy, Hedebygade 5 - 4th, 1754 KOBENHAVN V.

**Sweden** : Kenth Billing, Flugvägen 27c, 541 65 SKÖVDE. Karin Larsson, Flogstav. 49 B 211, 752 63 UPPSALA. Ingvar Sellström, Box 256, 881 00 SOLLEFTEÅ.

People from all of the Scandinavian countries can travel together to Cologne. For information, contact Kenth Billing (address above).



## December

**Sat 1** Fathom me, God, and know my heart, probe me, know my thoughts, and guide me in the way that is everlasting.

*Psalms 139*

**SUN 2** God is faithful and has called you to live in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ.

*1 Corinthians 1.3-9*

**Mon 3** Isaiah wrote: The mountain of the Lord will be lifted up higher than the hills. And peoples without number will come, saying: let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that he may teach us his ways.

*Isaiah 2.1-5*

**Tue 4** John wrote: He who was like a Son of man, the Christ, placed his hand on me and said: Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last, the Living One, I was dead and now I am alive for all time.

*Revelation 1.9, 13a, 17-18*

**Wed 5** The one who delights in the law of God is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never wither.

*Psalms 1*

**Thu 6** In a vision Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord say: Whom shall I send? And he answered: Here I am, send me.

*Isaiah 6.1-8*

**Fri 7** John wrote: Thus says the Lord: Though you are not very strong, you have kept my Word, and now I have opened in front of you a door that no one can close.

*Revelation 3.7-8, 9c-10a, 11-12*

**Sat 8** From before the creation of the world, God chose us to be holy and to live in his presence in love.

*Ephesians 1.3-6a*

**SUN 9** According to God's promise, we are looking forward to new heavens and a new earth where justice will dwell.

*2 Peter 3.8 -9, 13-14*

**Mon 10** Isaiah wrote: The Lord spoke to me like this when his hand took hold of me: Do not fear what these people fear, nor be afraid. It is I whom you shall regard as holy.

*Isaiah 8.11-13a, 17-18*

**Tue 11** God said: I am the Beginning and the End. I will give water from the well of life freely to anyone who is thirsty.

*Revelation 21.5-7*

**Wed 12** Isaiah wrote: On that day there will be no more hurt or violence, for the land will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the water covers the bottom of the sea.

*Isaiah 11.5-9*

**Thu 13** The servants of God will see him face to face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. It will never be night again and they will not need the light of a lamp or of the sun, because the Lord will be shining upon them.

*Revelation 22.1-5*

**Fri 14** Mary said: The mercy of the Lord reaches from age to age upon those who worship him.

*Luke 1.46-56*

**Sat 15** The Lord has removed the veil that enveloped all the peoples, he has destroyed death for ever.

*Isaiah 25.6a, 7-9*

**SUN 16** As the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord will cause justice and praise to spring forth.

*Isaiah 61.1-2a, 10-11*

**Mon 17** Jesus fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah: He will not shout or argue, nor put out the flickering flame. All the nations will put their hope in him.

*Matthew 12.15b-21*

**Tue 18** Ever hopeful, O Lord, I will praise you more and more, my lips shall proclaim your justice.

*Psalms 71*

**Wed 19** God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.

*John 3.16-17*

**Thu 20** John the Baptist said: I am not the Christ, but have been sent ahead of him. He must grow greater and I must grow smaller.

*John 3.26-30*

**Fri 21** Isaiah wrote: Once again the Lord will breathe upon us, and the wilderness will become an orchard, an orchard green like the forest.

*Isaiah 32.15-20*

**Sat 22** Jesus said: Whoever sees me, sees the one who sent me.

*John 12.44-46*

**SUN 23** Mary said to the angel Gabriel: I am the Lord's servant; may all happen to me as you have said.

*Luke 1.26-38*

**Mon 24** In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets in many different ways; but in our time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

*Hebrews 1.1-6*

**Tue 25** CHRISTMAS The angel said to the shepherds: Do not be afraid, for I bring you news of great joy, to be shared by the whole people: today a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

*Luke 2.1-20*

**Wed 26** SAINT STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR

As they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, then in a loud voice he cried out: Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

*Acts 7.55-60*

**Thu 27** ST JOHN, APOSTLE and EVANGELIST John wrote: This is the message that we have received from Christ: God is light, in him there is no darkness at all.

*1 John 1.1-7*

**Fri 28** Lord, our God, how great is your name in all the earth. May your glory be sung by the mouths of children and babes in arms.

*Psalms 8*

**Sat 29** This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son for the forgiveness of our sins.

*1 John 4.7-10*

**SUN 30** Paul wrote: Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing from selfish ambition; look not to your own interest but to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus himself.

*Philippians 2.1-8*

**Mon 31** Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life...Your Father in heaven knows what you need. Do not be worried about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day's own trouble is sufficient for the day.

*Matthew 6.25-27, 34*

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT LUKE, CHAPTERS 1-2

These chapters can be viewed in two ways. By recounting these stories, the earliest version of which goes back to Mary and the family of Jesus, the author of the Gospel wants to tell us who Jesus is: he is the Messiah, the Son of David (1,32), the Lord (1,43), the Savior, Christ the Lord (2,11), the Lord's Anointed (2,26). He is the light to enlighten all the nations as well as the glory of his own people (2,32). He is thus God's yes to all his promises, God's unconditional yes to human beings, the object of his love (2,14). And this is true even if the no of many of his own people is destined to be focused on him, (2,34-35). Jesus did not "become" God's Son; he was the Son from the moment of his birth (1,35); when he was still a child he was aware of his unique relationship with God, whom he called his Father (2,49). Even at that age he was filled with the simplicity of divine wisdom, and this was a sign of his unique origin (2,47).

But Luke also told these stories so that we could follow the way of Mary. He presents Mary to us as the very type of all the believers of the New Covenant. Called by God's utterly free and undeserved choice, "full of grace," she becomes the bearer of Christ because she is open and consenting. From that moment on she goes forward by faith alone. She receives no more direct messages. All she has is what others have seen or felt (1,44; 2,17-18; 2,27-38). Alongside the great joy of the child's birth and the happiness of offering him to God, there are also times of darkness for her: the poverty of the birth (2,7), the announcement of the hostility that will pierce her heart as well (2,35), and especially, anxiety at losing the child (2,48). "Happy she who believed" (1,45): she shares fully in the bitter fate of her Son (2,35), and yet from the start she is blessed with him and because of him (1,42), and we will all call her blessed (1,48).



**Je 1** Christ came to announce the joyful message of peace: peace to those who are far away, peace to those who are close. Through him, in one Spirit, we all have free access to the Father.

*Ephesians 2.17-22*

**Wed 2** The Lord said to his people: You are my servant, I have chosen you, I will not reject you. Do not fear, for I am with you.

*Isaiah 41.8-10*

**Thu 3** Solomon wrote: Rest upon the Lord with all your heart, do not rely upon your own understanding.

*Proverbs 3.3-7*

We are including Bible readings for January along with those for November and December, since the next issue will be slightly delayed. It will be the letter published for the meeting in Cologne.

**Fri 4** John wrote: Let us love, since God loved us first.

*John 4.17-21*

**Sat 5** Jesus said: Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

*Matthew 11.25-30*

**SUN 6** EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

My soul is thirsting for you, my God, your love is better than life itself.

*Psalms 63*

**Mon 7** Paul wrote: Am I seeking the approval of men, or that of God? If I sought the approval of men how could I be a servant of Christ?

*Galatians 1.1-8,10*

**Tue 8** Paul wrote: Before I was born, God called me by his grace, then he revealed his Son in me.

*Galatians 1.11-24*

**Wed 9** Paul wrote: The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

*Galatians 2.16-21*

**Thu 10** God fashioned man, he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and man became a living being.

*Genesis 2.4b-7*

**Fri 11** Paul wrote: It no longer matters being Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, man or woman; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

*Galatians 3.23-29*

**Sat 12** Paul wrote: Let yourselves be led by the Spirit, and you will not be under the law. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness...trust in others, self-control, and against such things there is no law.

*Galatians 5.16-25*

**SUN 13** Isaiah prophesied concerning Christ: He will uphold justice faithfully; he will not weaken or be discouraged before he has established true justice on the earth.

*Isaiah 42.1-7*

**Mon 14** The Lord said to Abram: Leave your country, your kinfolk, and your father's house, for the land that I will show you. And Abram set out, as the Lord had told him.

*Genesis 12.1-5*

**Tue 15** Paul wrote: Stand firm my brothers, for Christ has set us free in order that we remain free.

*Galatians 5.1,13-14*

**Wed 16** A leper came to Jesus and, kneeling down, said to him: If you are willing, you can make me clean. Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him, saying: I am willing; be clean!

*Mark 1.40-45*

## THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK

Anyone who begins reading this Gospel cannot fail to be struck by its utter simplicity. At once the author places us before the figure of Jesus. What interests him is the manifestation of the Son of God, his "epiphany". He knows that Jesus taught (1,22,27), but he does not spend much time explaining his teaching. He is more interested in the actor himself, who is stronger than the powers of this world (3,27), who has more authority than the wise of this world (1,22; 2,10).

There is something salutary in this directness and simplicity. We cannot reduce this Gospel to our measure by moral considerations or intellectual sleight-of-hand. Jesus is there; he passes by (it even seems that he always passes by quickly) and he acts. What can human beings do? Take a stand for or against him; turn to him (1,15) or close their hearts (3,5); be with him (3,34) or remain with the Separator (3,22-30). All who hear his call tear themselves away from what holds them back and begin a life in his footsteps (1,16-20; 2,13-14), a life which is literally "with" him--they become his companions (3,14), his brother, sister or mother (3,35);

When Jesus begins his ministry, right away he is caught up in a struggle (1,12-13). The territory is already occupied by evil powers and their prey must be torn away from them (3,27; cf. 1,23-28; 1,34). In addition, a conflict with the religious authorities quickly begins (2,6--3,6) and in no time at all becomes ominous (3,6). But although Jesus enters the world as the strongest, as the one with authentic authority, he does not exploit this strength. Time and time again he asks people to keep it secret (cf. 1,44). He has no desire to impose his presence. The only victory he is interested in is that of love.

Chapter 4 shows us that Jesus' word is a powerful reality of the Kingdom ("The sower went out"); it is only accepted by a small number (4,8). It can only be welcomed where there is an abundance of generosity (4,24), a commitment to the very end (4,15-20).

**Thu 17** Paul wrote: Let us not tire of doing good, for in due time we shall reap a harvest if we do not lose heart.

*Galatians 6.6-10*

**Fri 18** Jesus said: I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

*Mark 2.13-17*

**Sat 19** My soul waits for the Lord, I rely on his promise; my soul relies on the Lord more than a night-watchman on the coming of dawn.

*Psalms 130*

**SUN 20** Jesus asked the first disciples: What are you searching for? They answered: Master, where do you live? He said to them: Come and see.

*John 1.35-42*

**Mon 21** Joseph forgave his brothers saying: Do not be afraid; is it for me to put myself in God's place? The harm you planned to do to me has by God's design been turned to good.

*Genesis 50.15-21*

**Tue 22** Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: You welcomed the gospel despite the great opposition all round you, and so you have become a model for all believers.

*1 Thessalonians 1.5c-10*

**Wed 23** Jesus called to himself those he wanted, and he appointed twelve to be with him and to be sent out to preach.

*Mark 3.7-19*

**Thu 24** Like gold tested in a furnace, God purifies those who love him. Those who are faithful to him will dwell with him in love.

*Wisdom 3.1-9*

**Fri 25** Jesus said: Whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister and my mother.

*Mark 3.31-35*

**Sat 26** You see the humble, O Lord, and though I live surrounded by trouble, you give me life.

*Psalms 138*

**SUN 27** Thus says the Lord: Is that the sort of fast that pleases me: hanging your head like a bending reed? Is not this rather the sort of fast that pleases me -to break the fetters of injustice, to let the oppressed go free, and to share your bread with the hungry?

*Isaiah 58.5-9a*

**Mon 28** In a parable, Jesus said: Those who hear the word of God and receive it are like seed falling on good soil that produces much fruit.

*Mark 4.13-20*

**Tue 29** The Wisdom of God is a holy spirit, an untarnished mirror of his activity, a reflection of his goodness.

*Wisdom 7.22-26*

**Wed 30** Paul wrote: You are all sons of light, sons of the day. So let us not sleep but let us keep awake and sober.

*1 Thessalonians 5.1-2,4-6*

**Thu 31** God has offered us salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that, whether we live or die, we may live united to him.

*1 Thessalonians 5.9b-15*



## TAIZE : SOME VISITS

While the meetings of young people go on from week to week in Taizé, there are also visits of church leaders. Among these visits :

— The bishop responsible for pastoral work with young people in India : his visit gave an opportunity to speak about the preparation of the meeting in Madras, planned for the end of 1985.

— Ten French bishops, for two days of prayer and common reflection.

— A Lutheran bishop from East Germany who, up to last year, was the president of the Council of Protestant Churches in his country. He came accompanied by five persons, to return the visits which Brother Roger has made several times in the last years to East Germany.

## THE NEXT MEETINGS

Among the meetings which will take place in 1985, there are two for which preparations have already begun :

LYON, FRANCE : March 2-3  
DUBLIN, IRELAND : May 3-5

In the city itself and in the region, from autumn until spring, prayers and meetings will be held in the parishes which wish, involving people of all ages. In this way the meeting in spring will be the sharing of several months of prayer together, of a search for reconciliation, and commitments taken by everybody for peace, for unity, for communion and for trust between one another and all peoples.

## PORTUGAL

Eight young people from different regions of Portugal went to spend a week in a village in Alentejo, one of the poorest areas of the country, to share the life of the people :

*" Staying in a very poor house, without beds, water or electricity, we really felt part of the life of the people who welcomed us warmly. From early morning, children came and stayed with us. Later on, older people started coming. The door was always open. Some children stayed until late in the evening for the prayer in our improvised chapel. The people invited us to their homes and offered us the little that they had and it was impossible to refuse.*

*The Eucharist is but rarely celebrated because the priest has not enough time to come. The children do not receive catechism and the adults have little contact with the Church. Most of the children and teenagers are not baptised. Nevertheless, it is surprising to hear that some women meet during the month of May for the prayer of Our Lady of Fatima. They pray each night in their houses. They say that they learnt how to pray with their parents when they were young. So, through them the faith continues to be passed on. "*

## CHILE

It was in 1979 that the letter for the meeting in Barcelona was written in a slum in Te

mucu (Chile), where the majority of the population is Indian. Since then, in the same shack, a family has continued to lead a daily prayer. The mother of the family writes :

*" Say that we are well, and that we continue to work in the neighbourhood of Lanin and in another very poor area called San Felipe. Many of the young help us and accompany me. This is the fruit of so many years of perseverance and of prayer together. I would like so much that you could see the communion that has grown in the neighbourhood. So many people are working to spread the Gospel and to serve one another. Now there is a place where 80 to 90 children and old people can be fed, sometimes more. Taking turns, each week two of the mothers of the neighbourhood cook the food and bake the bread each day. We also continue the prayers in Lanin and San Felipe.*

**A set of 36 slides (plus cassette with 20 min. commentary and music) about the community and the vocation to reconciliation is now available. £ 18.75 & postage, from : Mowbray's, 28 Margaret Street, LONDON W1N 7LB. tel : 01-580-2812 (especially for schools, parish groups, chaplaincies)**

**A programme about the meetings at Taizé will go out on ITV (Britain) early next year (in the series "Encounter"), probably on Sunday January 20th, at 2pm.**

**Every week next summer a regular coach service will run between London and Taizé. Return fare : £ 50 (adults 27 or over : £ 60). Details from : FRANK HARRIS COACHES Ltd, Manor Road, West Thurrock, Grays, ESSEX RM16 1EH. tel : Purfleet (04026)4911**

## ASIA

Two brothers of the community, of different Asian nationalities, write from the very poor village in an Asian country where they live :

*" In our village, many of the men have no work. This village really is a place of suffering. There are so many alcoholics and so much sickness. The children are often the victims of broken families. But it is also a place of hope, above all because of the children. If the children were not there, the songs of the kingdom of God would probably have ceased because of all the hardship and suffering.*

*Recently a man of the village was killed because of his political allegiance. Tensions quickly mounted. The political parties were ready for confrontation and many families feared a reprisal. One day, while we were in our house in the middle of praying before the Blessed Sacrament, we heard shots and police cars. People came to hide with us. Sometimes I went out at night secretly to visit the families and see how they were. Little by little things calmed down. We were not at all frightened. Our source is not in trust in ourselves, but in the Risen Lord. And I have often thought about the beginnings of our community, in France, when during the second world war, Jews were sheltered in our house in Taizé to save their lives. "*

## UNITED STATES

*" The inner-city of St. Louis, Missouri, at first glance could be compared to a desert dry and desolate, empty and abandoned, incapable of supporting life.*

*One Sunday afternoon, some fifty young people from the St. Louis area walked, talked, prayed and sang together through the inner city. They were on their way to a celebration of peace and reconciliation led by brothers at Taizé at the cathedral.*

*All along the route, about five miles, these young people were confronted by the power of the desert : by the emptiness, by the abandonment and the death which seem to have the upper hand. Buildings were burned out, boarded up, abandoned, emptied of life and hope. Vacant lots were covered with weeds with trash and old tires. Factories and shops stood silent. Faded signs which once signalled the hospitality of a corner market or the energy of a neighborhood industry were now only reminders of what had been the vitality of the city.*

*Our faith, deeply rooted in scripture and nourished by the Holy Spirit, declares that there is life even in the midst of the desert. The young people visited places of hope in which God has led people to engage in urban ministries : Christian communities at worship, praising God and struggling to make a difference as God calls them as witnesses to new life ; places of hospitality offering meals, welcoming women and children, offering care, counselling, and clothing.*

*For the pilgrims, there was the beginning of a sense for how barren the urban desert can be. Perhaps some of them now have understood the desert through which we must all go on the way toward real justice and peace. By the end of the day, they had witnessed how God acts through people so that the wilderness and the dry land of the city may be glad.*

*Searchers for God, and seekers after the Christ, we shall rejoice with joy and sing for out of the desert shall grow the crocus and out of death shall come new life. "*

The **LETTER FROM TAIZE** is published bimonthly in ten languages. A supporting subscription helps subsidize a solidarity fund, making it possible for those who cannot pay to receive the **LETTER**.

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